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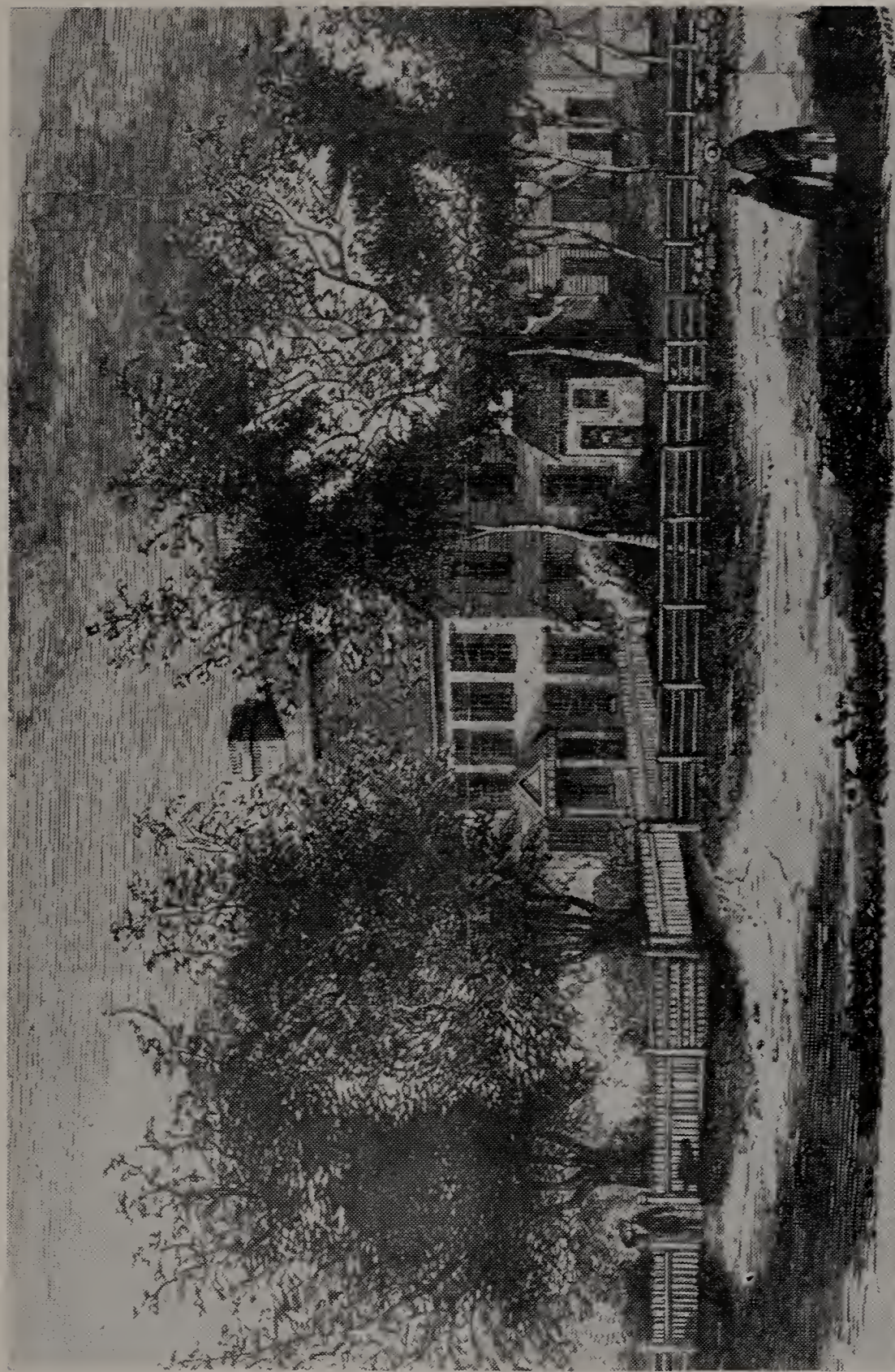
The FIRST
PARISH of FRAMINGHAM
1701 to 1951

JOHN McKINSTRY MERRIAM

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Mansion of Rev. Matthew Bridge, built in 1747



View of Framingham (Centre) Common 1808. Originally painted by Daniel Bell, later lithographed.

The First Parish of Framingham

1701 to 1951

By JOHN McKINSTRY MERRIAM*

Framingham incorporated as a "township" June 25, 1700, and John Swift ordained as the first pastor of the church "embodied" therein October 8, 1701:—These are the events locally significant occurring 250 years ago, as the beginning of our town and parish history. They are of meaningful historical association. Framingham recognized the birth period of the civic town last June in a program very well planned and executed and now we have come together in historic King's Chapel in Boston under the auspices of the Unitarian Historical Society to review the history of the religious parish.

The area of Framingham was midway between earlier settlements. To the northwest were Sudbury and "Marlbury" and to the southeast Natick and "Sherborne." In the 1690's, a distinct settlement had developed midway increasing to some 64 dwellings with "over 300 souls." A movement for a new town was started in 1697, resulting in an order to plot the land, and John Gore, a sworn surveyor was selected for this purpose and presented a plan in October 1699 of which I have a photostatic copy. He was a great-great-uncle of Christopher Gore in whose memory we have the beautiful mansion in Waltham. The legends written in his hand on the original copy are: by way of title "This Plot represents the form and quantity of a parcel of land commonly called Framingham as it was taken and finished in October 1699 in the laying down and measuring whereof, one inch contained 200 rods. These spots in the Plott representing the several houses already built there." pr. John Gore, Surveyor. And then by way of description, in the upper right-hand corner, "From Framingham Meeting House to Sudbury Meeting House is seven miles and 84 rods and the remotest of Sudbury Farms between these places is not above two miles and a half distant from Framingham Meeting House, and is four miles and three-quarters from the Sudbury Meeting House;" and in the lower right-hand corner, "From Framingham Meeting House to the Sherborne Meeting House is five miles and one-quarter and the nearest of Framingham inhabitants is three miles and one-quarter distant therefrom and two miles from Framingham Meeting House."

*A paper read before the Unitarian Historical Society, 1951.

And with this plan a petition was presented, “ . . . To his Excellency, Richard, Earl of Bellemont, Capt. General and Governor in Chief of his Maj. Province of the Mass. Bay in N. England, etc., and the Honored Court now assembled in Boston.

“We underwritten, do humbly petition, that agreeable to our former petition to the Honored Court, (relating to a township), we may now be heard in a few things . . . ”

This is a well-argued brief following through eight numbered paragraphs, concluding, “ . . . Finally if any of Sherborne or any other town, shall pretend anything to the Honored Court, which may lead to the hindrance of a grant of our petition . . . we humbly petition that we may have admittance to speak for ourselves.”

The third paragraph is of special reference to our subject and I quote it in full: “Inasmuch as that for a long time we have lain under a heavy burden, as to our attendance on the Publick Worship of God, so that for the most part our going to meeting to other places on the Sabbath, is our hardest day’s work in the week; and by reason of these difficulties that attend us therein, we are forced to leave many at home, especially our children, where to our grief, the Sabbath is too much profaned; and being desirous to sanctify the Sabbath as to the duty of rest required, as far as we can with convenience; these motives moving us, we have unanimously built a Meeting House, and have a minister among us, and we now humbly petition to your Honours, to countenance our present proceedings.” And the answer to this petition in the following June was the Charter of the Town.

It is thus a matter of record that there was a meeting house in this Township before October 1699, begun probably in 1698 and finished in the early months of 1699. The rough sketch on the Gore Plan shows the location on the crest of the hill referred to later as “Church Hill,” a building two stories high with wide spreading roof facing South. The exact location is now marked by suitable marker in what is known as the Old Burial Ground.

John Swift of Milton had already come as a temporary minister. He was one of 14 graduates of Harvard in the Class of 1697 and had been favorably recommended as a "person well qualified for the work of the ministry" by a committee of three ordained ministers, and on May 22, 1701, the town voted to call him "to abide and settle with us as our legal minister." He was in his twenty-third year. He had given the matter consideration and was accepted and ordained October 8. He married Sarah Tileston of Dorchester and came here for his life work as the first minister of Framingham, continuing until his death through forty-five years of earnest service. Grants were made to him for land as a home and towards his livelihood, with money salary of 60 lbs., and with the town to supply his firewood.

In a paper written by Walter Adams, prepared for the Centennial Exercises of the Saxonville Methodist Church, there is this description of this First Meeting House: "This Meeting House was 40 feet long, by 30 feet wide, was boarded and clapboarded without, but not painted. It was unfinished within, and for some years was furnished only with rough benches for seats. There was no cellar under it, and it was minus any heating facilities whatever. The day even of a foot stove was not yet. In truth and fact the First Meeting House in Framingham was nothing but a barn, and such a barn as would today be considered hardly fit for the housing of cattle. Yet in such a barrack through Summer's heat and Winter's cold — cold at times so intense that, as Mr. Swift records, 'Ye Communion Bread froze and rattled in ye plate,' John Swift's parishioners listened to his preaching and John Swift, an able, learned, scholarly, charitable, godly man, expounded the word and strove by his teaching to guide his flock into the way of salvation, and to keep them from straying therefrom."

A very significant record of the service of John Swift is contained in a diary of which Walter Adams gave a very full summary in the exercises marking the dedication of a memorial tablet on the site of the Swift Home on Maple Street. The original diary cannot now be placed and this description is most fortunate: "It begins with Dec. 30, 1716, and ends

with July 14, 1728, and consists of 414 closely written pages, each 3 and 7/16 inches long by 2 and 7/16 inches wide. Superficially examined, this diary appears to be merely a record of the texts from which the writer preached from Sunday to Sunday, of baptisms and admissions to the Church, and other ecclesiastical incidents, varied occasionally by notices of passing events, but carefully and sympathetically studied, it is full of interest and enables us to draw many a mental picture of the writer and his surroundings, and to form an opinion of John Swift's mind and character."

From this diary we also learn that peace did not abide in the church. There were contentions and strifes; and traditions preserved for us by one of the historians of Framingham inform us that these strifes and contentions were bitter and grievous and a source of great anxiety and trouble to Mr. Swift, and must have contributed to hasten his declining health. But of these the less said the better, especially in view of the fact that in a few references to them occurring in his diary, Mr. Swift mentions no names, and registers no complaints or comments. Another source of grief, care and anxiety to Mr. Swift, never mentioned, however, in his diary, was the insanity of his wife, who long before his death became demented, and so remained to the end of her life.

Mr. Adams continues:—"There is not in Mr. Swift's diary a single uncharitable, unkind or disrespectful word about any one. He records facts and leaves them to speak for themselves. Of himself he records, with very few exceptions, only such things as pertain to his official work and duties. Not once does he indulge in an expression savouring of self-satisfaction, self-importance, or self-righteousness. Occasionally there is written an entry entirely in Latin, the more to emphasize the importance of the event recorded."

In the diary of Cotton Mather we find an interesting reference to these troubles against which John Swift struggled so manfully. Under date of August 14, 1718, Mather writes, "G. D." (referring to the Good Devoted for the day) "Divisions and Confusions at Framlingham" (a rare instance of the correct spelling of the name of the mother town in Suffolk, England) "call for my best Endeavours to bring them unto a

Period.” This would seem to indicate that Mather had come to Framingham for a conference on the spot with Swift but just what suggestion he had left we do not know.

In 1743, a Town Meeting was held to provide some method to help Mr. Swift, he being unable to preach; and in 1745 the end came. We have no account of the funeral, but the burial was where the pulpit of the first church had stood. The Town provided a “decent tombstone” on which was inscribed the following epitaph in Latin:

“Here lies the Reverend John Swift, who died in 1745, April 24th, in the 67th year of his age. Adorned with gifts both native and acquired; he was a master in the art of teaching; a model of living, conforming all his acts to the divine laws. To all those with whom he had to do, he exhibited the wisdom of the serpent and the innocence of the dove. While living, he was very much beloved, and he left at death a grateful, though mournful memory to his friends. Through many scenes and trials, and even unto death, he manifested a rare discretion, modesty, patience and submission to the Divine Will. He at length rests with the Lord, looking for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body.”

This tombstone unfortunately had disappeared in the lapse of time and a simple horizontal slab now marks the grave, referring to it however as the spot where the pulpit stood in the First Meeting House where he preached for the period of 35 years. During the last 10 years of his service, a second Meeting House had been provided, located after considerable discussion and disagreement near the northeasterly corner of the land which soon became the Centre Common. And this house was raised, “following a vote by the town that the committee procure one barrel of rum, three barrels of cider, six barrels of beer, with suitable provision of meat, bread, etc., for such and only such as labor in raising the Meeting House.” There is this description in Temple’s History:

“In size, this house was fifty-five by forty-two feet, and thirty feet between joints. It had three stories, with doors on the front side, and at the east and west ends. 150 pounds more were granted to build the house, making 550 pounds the cost of finishing the outside—though it was not painted till 1772. The sum of 350 lbs. was granted at different times for finishing the inside of the house. The pulpit was on the north side, and double galleries extended around the other three sides. The committee was instructed to build a pulpit, a body of long seats below, leaving an alley between the men’s and women’s seats, lay the floors, make seats in the lower gallery, and two pairs of stairs (men’s and

women's) to said gallery. The space next the walls under the galleries was reserved for pews. The ministerial pew was the first on the left hand side of the pulpit; and a pew in the northeast corner was reserved for the town's use."

It is fitting to close the record of Mr. Swift's service by quoting this obituary notice which appeared in the Boston Evening Post on May 13, 1745:

"On the 24th of the last month, died, at Framingham, after a long indisposition, the Rev. Mr. John Swift, the first Pastor of the church in Framingham, in the 67th year of his age, and the 45th of his ministry. As he was a gentleman of considerable natural powers, so he acquired a considerable degree of human knowledge and useful learning. He particularly excelled in rhetoric and oratory, and as a critic in the Greek language. His piety was sincere and eminent. His preaching was sound and Evangelical. As a pastor, he was diligent, faithful and prudent; and in his conversation, he was sober, grave, and profitable, yet affable, courteous and pleasant. When he received injuries at any time, he bore them with singular discretion and meekness; and the various trials and sorrows with which he was exercised, especially in the latter part of his life, gave occasion for showing forth his wisdom, humility, patience and resignation to the Divine will. He was had in high esteem by the Association to which he belonged."

The selection of a successor was a matter of some difficulty. Two calls were given by the Church but the Town non-concurred. On December 2nd, however, the Church and the Town concurred in calling Matthew Bridge, a graduate of Harvard, as one of a class of twenty-five in the year 1741. He accepted and was duly ordained February 19, 1745, and provision was made for the entertainment of the minister and messengers at the home of Joseph Stone, the building now known as the Abner Wheeler House on the Turnpike. There was, however, serious division resulting in the signing of a protest that the following doctrines were omitted or slightly touched upon in his sermons:

"Particularly the doctrine of Original Sin; the Imputation of it; the total loss of the Image of God in the fall of Adam; the wrath and curse of God consequent thereon; the Freeness and Sovereignty of Divine Grace in electing some to everlasting life, and the provision made in the way of the New Covenant for their salvation by Jesus Christ; the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration, and an Almighty Power of the Spirit of God for the production of the New Creature, and re-

newing the Image of God upon the Soul in Sanctification; the nature of that Faith whereby the Souls of Believers were united to Christ; the way of the sinner's Justification by the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ; as also those discriminating doctrines which shew the difference between that Faith, that Repentance, and that Obedience, which is merely legal, superficial, and servile, and that which is evangelical. On this account, we desire that this venerable council will consider us as wholly dissenting in the settlement and ordination of Mr. Bridge." This bears 33 signatures, a very considerable body.

The matter of acceptance must have been a difficult matter for this young man of 24 years, coming to his first parish. He came from a prominent family in Cambridge and Lexington, a great-grandson of John Bridge, the first Deacon in the history of New Towne, who is memorized by a statue on the Cambridge common. He had married Anna Danforth, the daughter of Nicholas, who came from Framlingham, England, with his six motherless children, and contributed outstanding lines of descendants towards the development of the Bay Colony, among them this minister, and later James Abram Garfield, President of the United States.

As a result of this division, a second church was established which later became the First Baptist Church of Framingham. In spite of this division, however, Mr. Bridge proved acceptable through a long period of service. His association with the prominent Cambridge family led to his meeting Washington when he came to Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, and served as a Chaplain. His death came September 2, 1775, resulting from exposure in the camp in Cambridge. While in Framingham, he built in 1747 the old Gambrel-roofed house on Kellogg Street, and occupied this house until his death. I have this picture of the house taken many years ago.

Calvin Stebbins, to whom I shall refer later, in his historic address fifty years ago, refers to Mr. Bridge as follows:

"He was a man of striking personal appearance and of mild and amiable disposition, but he was not 'a peace-at-all-price man.' At times he seems to have been inspired by the

real spirit of the church militant, in the literal sense of the word. When the difficulties between the mother country and these colonies grew serious his patriotism rose with the danger, and when the appeal to arms came he heard it and was among the first of his cloth to volunteer as chaplain. It is said that at the ever memorable scene at Cambridge, on the 3rd of July, 1775, the place assigned to him was beside General Washington under the old elm. (Bridge, Genealogy, 16.) Whatever the emotions that moved the hearts of those brave men, they could not have realized the full import of the scene they then witnessed, or have divined its real significance."

And there is this obituary notice in the Boston Gazette of September, 1775:

"On Saturday Morning the 3d Instant departed this Life, the Rev. Mr. Matthew Bridge of Framingham, in the 55th year of his Age, and near the 30th of his Ministry. In him were found the true friend and sincere Christian. His affable Temper, and free familiar Disposition, rendered him sociable and agreeable to his Acquaintance and connections. He left a disconsolate Widow and five Children, together with the affectionate People of his Charge, to lament the insupportable Loss. His Remains were decently interred the last Monday."

Following his death, for several years the Parish was without a settled minister. On January 10, 1781, Rev. David Kellogg, graduate of Dartmouth College, was ordained minister. He came to Framingham and married Sally, the daughter of Matthew Bridge, and lived in the Bridge house until his death, so the house today is known as the Kellogg house.

He was a man of ability and devotion to his ministerial duties, of outstanding personality and also a real leader in the social and religious life of the Town. His service is summarized by Mr. Temple as follows:

"Rev. Dr. Kellogg performed the full duties of the ministry to his people for fifty years, lacking four months; and, after the settlement of a colleague, he continued to preach, as occasion offered or required until his 84th year; sometimes supplying vacant pulpits in neighboring parishes, and often

assisting the junior pastor at home. And till his last sickness, he was always in his place in the pulpit on the Lord's day. He died Aug. 13, 1843, aged 87 years, 9 mos."

"In personal appearance Dr. Kellogg was more than ordinarily prepossessing. In stature he was above the medium height; with a well-proportioned and muscular frame; a fresh yet placid countenance; strongly marked features, expressive of an even temperament, good sense, decision and benevolence. His general bearing combined dignity with ease; his step was firm, his presence commanding. His was, in the best sense, a Christian gentleman of the old school." See him as he stands in the gateway of this picture.

"Dr. Kellogg possessed intellectual powers of a high order. There was always a naturalness and healthy vigor, and a cheerful tone in his thoughts. And in this, his mental powers exactly correspond with his bodily powers. He was an active, cheerful man. From the time he commenced his professional studies till he left the active duties of the ministry, he rose in the morning at daybreak; and was busy and systematic in the use of time. He was always punctual. 'It is doubtful,' says a member of his family, 'whether, in the whole course of his public life, he ever met an appointment five minutes late.' "

There are two interesting anecdotes which I think I can refer to without detracting from his merit. He was a man of temperate habits, but not a teetotaler, and at the time of a temperance revival he was asked to sign a pledge. He was reluctant, however, stating that he felt that an occasion might come when he needed some alcoholic stimulant. This objection was met by the statement that he could have this upon the advice of a physician. Then, his reply was, "All right, I will sign the pledge, but with this understanding: that I am to be my own physician." Another time on some wintry night before he had signed the pledge, I take it, he came into the tavern and said to the bartender, shrugging his shoulders, "Mix us up some toddy and make it good and strong," and then a few days later he remarked to the barkeeper, "That was a strong drink you gave me," adding he got home only with some difficulty. And the bartender said to him, "Do you

know what you said the other night?" "No, what did I say," the minister replied. "You said mix us up some toddy, make it good and strong, and then you took it all!"

There is this summary of the ministry of Dr. Kellogg in Barry's History: "After a protracted ministry of about half a century, Dr. Kellogg voluntarily retired from his pastoral office, about the month of September 1830; after which he continued for many years to reside upon his estate, in the enjoyment of a vigorous and 'green old age.' Many will recall with pleasure, his venerable form, slightly bowed, his tall and robust figure, his fresh yet placid countenance, his dignified and courteous manners, as he moved among us, almost sole survivor of the generation who had welcomed him to the sacred office, as their Christian pastor and guide. Within a year before his decease, occurred an incident expressive of the honorable estimation in which he was held by the inhabitants of the town. May, 1843, members of all the religious societies united in a tea-party, at the town hall, at which he was invited to meet them. His appearance was greeted with a warm welcome; and he improved the occasion to enforce sentiments of mutual toleration and Christian harmony, worthy of durable remembrance."

Thus, we have reviewed the record of these three ministers, a service altogether from 1701 to 1843, a period of one hundred and forty-two years, young men coming to their first parish and remaining through the entire period of their lives, a most unusual record, surely not equalled by any nearby community.

In the later years of the Kellogg ministry there came the Unitarian movement, resulting in the division of the church life continued in part by the First Parish Unitarian, and by the so-called orthodox church organization through the record of the Plymouth Church to the present time. The leading Unitarian preachers were William Ellery Channing and Theodore Parker, but the teacher was Henry Ware, the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard. He was a native of Sherborn, a nearby town which had been and continued to be the family home and must have had association with Framingham. Thomas Hollis of London in some way had become interested

in the new college at Cambridge, and had founded the two first professorships, that of Divinity and of Mathematics. In the Ware Genealogy there is this account of Henry Ware:

In 1805, "In the forty-first year of his age, he was elected to the chair of the Hollis Professorship of Divinity in Harvard College; he was inaugurated on May 14th, and removed to Cambridge in June. This election marks an era in the history of the Congregational churches in New England. It was vehemently opposed by a portion of the clergy and other leading men, on the ground that Mr. Ware's theology was of so liberal a character that it was not right to place him in a professorship intended to inculcate and maintain Calvinistic doctrines. As a matter of fact, Thomas Hollis of London, England, had founded the professorship in 1719, was not a Calvinist but a very liberal Baptist, who had required in his deed of gift only that his professor should 'believe in the Scriptures as the only perfect rule of faith and manners,' and should promise to 'explain the Scriptures with integrity and uprightness, according to the best light that God shall give him.' Mr. Ware took no part in the controversies occasioned by his appointment until 1820, by the advice of friends, he published a Reply to 'Letters to Unitarians,' by Dr. Woods, and followed up for several years the discussion thus begun. Meanwhile he was devoted to the regular duties of his position, preparing elaborate lectures on religion, and conducting the instruction of classes."

In September 1829, the division of doctrine developed here so that the parish voted to have the pulpit supplied three Sabbaths by Orthodox, and then three Sabbaths by Unitarian preachers. This arrangement continued for about three months.

On January 20, 1830, a new Church, called the Hollis Evangelical Society, was formed by the friends of Orthodoxy and the next Sabbath, January 24, the pastor and church met for worship in the Town House, where they continued to hold religious services till the erection of a new meeting house. The church* retained the name of the "Church of Christ in Framingham."

*On the title page of his "History of Framingham," 1847, Mr. Barry calls himself "Late Pastor of the First Church in Framingham."

The selection of the Hollis name was an emphatic protest with something of satire against the religious doctrine taught by Henry Ware as the Hollis professor of Divinity.

The parish successor of David Kellogg was Artemas Bowers Muzzey. He was ordained June 30, 1830, prominent men taking part in the ordination; among them Converse Francis and Ezra Stiles Gannet. He was a native of Lexington, a Harvard graduate in 1824, an A. M. from the Divinity School in 1828, and minister here from 1830-1833. This was his first parish. He was a loyal disciple of Henry Ware, the leader of the Harvard Unitarianism, for he gave his name to his son, Henry Ware Muzzey, born here December 1832. We have a beautiful reference to this sectarian division in the address made here at the time of our Bicentennial by the Rev. Dr. Addison Ballard, a native of Framingham who had gained distinction in Lafayette College of Eastern Pennsylvania, as follows:

“Of course I cannot but remember the split in the Old Parish, the withdrawing of the ‘Orthodox,’ as they were styled, and the forming of this, the Second or Plymouth Church. But even about that I had at the time a pleasant experience which many years after was deepened into the most grateful recollection. My father continued his connection with the First Parish, my mother joined the Second Church and we children were allowed, without prejudice or special solicitation, to follow the bent each of his own mind. So far as I can recall the time, not a single word of even friendly discussion was ever spoken by my father or mother in the family about the division or about the differences in Theological belief which caused it. The expectation I then had of entering Harvard College was probably the chief reason why I alone of the children, kept going with my father to the First or Unitarian Church. Rev. Artemus B. Muzzey was their first pastor, to whom, for his warm interest in the children of the congregation, I became tenderly attached. Young as I was, I taught with heart-felt devotion for my little pupils (we were all little together), a class in that Sunday School. Failing to profit by the prudent example of my parents, I fell to urging the Unitarian views on my mother but

she would never gratify my fondness for disputation or ambition to carry a point. I used to read Unitarian tracts. Once I got hold of a tract entitled 'One Hundred Questions for Trinitarians to Answer.' I charged my forensic rifle with some of those questions and went downstairs from my study-chamber, to fire them off at mother. Mother was ironing, I remember. The irons were hot, and so was I. Mother was very peaceful, as it was her wont to be. In reply to those (as I eagerly believed) unanswerable questions, she said in her sweet way, 'I don't know about those things, Addison; I only know that Christ is a very precious Saviour to me.' "

Mr. Muzzey lived to be one of the oldest graduates of Harvard, coming down into my own time when I remember seeing him as one of the leaders of the Commencement Procession. He retired May 18, 1833, returning to his home town, Cambridge, where he served a long pastorate.

George Chapman, Harvard College 1828, followed him, but he died in office in the following year. There is this record in the Barry History. "His early death disappointed the sanguine hopes of an extensive circle of friends, to whom he was ardently attached, as well as the just expectations of his people, who fully appreciated his intelligence, sincerity, and devotion. He died of pulmonary disease, having administered the communion for the last time, January 5, 1834."

William Barry, the next in line, has left a record, the most unusual, in the history of the Parish, yes, in the history of the town. There is this summary in the Appleton Encyclopedia of American Biographies:

"Barry, William, author; b. Boston Jan. 1805; d. Chicago, 17 Jan. 1885. He was graduated at Brown University in 1822 and studied law, but entered Cambridge Divinity School in 1826, and after two years there spent two years more in study in Goettingen and Paris. He was ordained pastor of the South Congregational Church, Lowell, Mass., in 1830 and in 1835 took charge of the First Church in Framingham. Failing health forced him to give up his charge in 1844 and he traveled in Europe and Asia until 1847 when he returned and took charge of another church in Lowell. In 1853 his health

compelled him to cease work again and he moved to Chicago where he organized the Chicago Historical Association in 1856 and was Secretary and Librarian until 1868. Mr. Barry was one of the most accomplished scholars and ablest writers in the East. It was in his office that President Lincoln obtained his data for his memorable address in the Cooper Institute. Among his publications are: 'Thoughts on Christian Doctrine, Lowell 1845'; 'History of Framingham, Boston 1847'; 'Antiquities of Wisconsin,' in Wisconsin's Historical Selections, Volume III, and 'Writings from the East.' "

While in Framingham, he wrote the following book: " 'A History of Framingham, Mass.' including the Plantation, from 1640 to the Present Time, with an Appendix, Containing a Notice of Sudbury and Its First Proprietors; Also, A Register of the Inhabitants of Framingham before 1800, with Genealogical Sketches."

This begins with the introduction, "The following History can possess but little interest beyond the neighborhood, whose memorials it is designed to preserve. Some may even be disposed to question the propriety of dignifying with so ambitious an epithet, the simple annals of an agricultural town, or of seeking for them the distinction of a publication from the press. The public taste has, however, created a demand for such publications; and the inquisitive interest it betokens, in respect to the characters, the deeds, the personal fortunes, of the Planters of New England, is worthy of the past, and creditable to the present. Humble and unostentatious as are the annals of our New England villages, they are such only relatively, or as judged by false standards of glory and merit. The examples they display of heroic faith, of invincible courage, of generous self-sacrifice, of bold and untiring enterprise, the illustration they afford to the genius of the age, and the race that transformed the stern cliffs and gloomy forests of these Western wilds, into a cultivated and flourishing Commonwealth, the extraordinary spectacle everywhere presented of rising schools, amidst popular ignorance, of a stern morality amidst general degeneracy, of a devout and inflexible faith amidst widespread unbelief, of a jealous and enlightened love of liberty, amidst universal despotism, all reflect

honor upon the past,—are required to give completeness to New England history, and will be recalled with an ever-increasing interest, as time shall cover with the deepening mist of antiquity, the ‘beginnings of the Commonwealth.’ Well shall it be, if the record shall not gratify a vain curiosity, nor nourish a yet vainer boasting; but the rather feed a nobler emulation, a purer patriotism, a more exalted virtue, a more generous philanthropy.”

His association as the leader of the Chicago Historical Society marks outstanding service as the Historian of the Middle West. Here is a significant record: “At a special meeting of the Chicago Historical Society, held to do honor to his memory, the following resolution was presented by Judge Skinner and unanimously adopted:—Resolved, that the Chicago Historical Society in the death of Rev. William Barry mourns the departure of its original founder, its first secretary and librarian, its earliest and best friend—the one to whose zeal and enthusiasm it owes its early and great success and its establishment on a firm foundation. A profound student and accomplished writer, a courtly and elegant gentleman, he accomplished for this society at its outset and during the first year of its history surprising results, securing for it a position among kindred associations in this country and in foreign lands, and benefits, which, but for his efforts, could not have been attained.” Think what it meant to supply Abraham Lincoln with the historical data in the wonderful Cooper Institute speech. Douglas had said that the fathers of the Constitution who recognized slavery and the duty of returning fugitive slaves knew more about the matter than we do: why not leave it as they left it. And then, Lincoln, endorsing this statement, added, “But what did they know of these matters,” and then he proved by name, date, and occasion that a majority of the forty-three signers of the Constitution would have been free soilers if they had lived to the period approaching 1860. I have brought his picture with me, mounted with that of the Historian Josiah H. Temple who followed him. And here he is, an old, white-haired, full-bearded man approaching his 80th year. A pleasing memento of his service is the Hymn “Framingham” published

in the Harpsichord in 1852, practically 100 years ago, which will be played on the organ following this address.

The record of the ministers of the Parish following William Barry is as follows: John N. Bellows, 1846-48; Joseph H. Phipps, 1848-1853; Samuel D. Robbins, 1854-1867; Henry G. Spaulding, 1868-1873; Charles A. Humphreys, 1873-1891; Ernest C. Smith, 1892-1899; Calvin Stebbins, 1900-1910; James C. Hodgins, 1911-1915; John Henry Wilson, 1915-1924; Ralph H. Baldwin, 1925-1938; John O. Fisher, 1939-1949; with George F. Patterson, interim minister while Mr. Fisher was abroad as a World War II chaplain, and Clyde D. Williams, 1949.

One of these in my own time was Charles A. Humphreys. In the Civil War he had served as Chaplain of the Second Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers, and he left a very interesting book entitled: "Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison in the Civil War, 1863-1865." I think that in the matter of detail of the life of the soldier, as indicated, this is an unusual account. Here is a condensed sketch of contents: "War conditions in 1864"; "Women's help and inspiration in Camp and Hospital exemplified by Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell," wife of Col. Charles Russell Lowell, sister of Robert Gould Shaw; "Difficulties in holding Sunday services for the regiment"; "The Chaplain prepares a deserter for execution"; "A Day to Day Description of the Battle of the Wilderness"; "Taken as a prisoner, and sent to the guard-house for preaching patriotism"; "Freedom offered if he would go to Washington and urge on Lincoln an exchange of prisoners, which he declines"; "Released September 1864 and the joy of again being under the Union Flag"; "Description of Lee's surrender at Appomattox"; "The service April 16, 1865 following the news of the assassination of Lincoln."

And this final paragraph: "I count it one of the most precious privileges of my life that I once took in mine the hand of Abraham Lincoln—the brotherly hand that the first Inaugural held out to the threatening South this olive branch: 'We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretching

from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.' And I rejoice to have held in mine the firm hand that kept true the rudder of the Ship of State through all the storms of war; the kindly hand that heartened the soldiers in the field and in the hospital, wrote letters for the sick, and smoothed the pillow of the dying; the tender hand that wrote the Gettysburg address, and the Second Inaugural with its 'malice toward none' and its 'charity for all.' But more even than for all these I am proud to have clasped the strong hand that struck the fetters from millions of slaves and laid firm and forever in freedom the foundations of our nationality."

The service of Mr. Humphreys as minister began on November 1, 1873 and continued to November 1, 1891, when he moved to Randolph.

In 1915, he published a book of poems, "Excursions Towards Parnassus with Longings for Zion," beginning with this Preface: "These verses of mine I have never presumed to call poems; they are simply metric meditations along the way of a quiet life." But let me read a few: Here is an: "Introduction to Address on 'The Voice of Freedom' "

Awake, ye nationals, wake, with joyful songs arise,
And Liberty, fair Liberty, exalt ye to the skies !
Awake ye nations, wake, to the shrine of Freedom come,
And hear the tale I now relate of many victories won;
Of nations kept in darkness by Slavery's demon hand;
But brought to holy light and truth by Freedom's magic wand."

October 1854

How appropriate in 1950-60 ! And here is a "Parting Hymn for Class of 1860."

In lofty songs of grateful praise
Our hearts would now ascend
To Him who has our youth preserved,
Who will our life defend.

We've walked where Knowledge led the way;
In Wisdom's steps we've trod;
But truer wisdom here we've learned—
To know and fear our God.

In friendship strong our hearts have joined
Each other's toils to bear;
But now alone in life's hard strife
Our armor must we wear.

Let Wisdom ever be our guide,
Let all our life be love;
Then shall we meet again at last
In brighter worlds above.

June 17, 1860

And here is his answer to "What Is Life?"

When the toils of day are ended,
And we pause from all its strife,
Looking o'er the way we've wended,
Comes the question—What is Life?

And the answer comes as surely
To the simple, trusting soul:
Life is time for living purely
Writing truth upon its scroll;

Time for strong and earnest labor,
Time for kindly word and deed,
Time for love to every neighbor,
Time to give to every need,—

Bread to hungry mouths and famished,
Water clear to thirsting lips,
And to him—whose hopes are vanished,
Who the dregs of sorrow sips,—

Pity's tears, heart-hunger filling,
Sympathy's sweet cup of balm,
Cheering faith, and service willing
Stretching out the helpful palm.

Life is losing self in duty,
Loving best its lowliness;
Life is finding self in beauty,
Following most its holiness.

Life is growing each day stronger
For its conflicts stern and rude;
Life is finding each day longer
For its larger stores of good.

Life is not the greedy grasping
Of the pleasures of a day,
But the firm and thankful clasping
Of the joys that ever stay.

Life in youth is aspiration
After high and noble aims;
Manhood's life is consecration
To the work that honor claims.

Life for age is recollection
Brightening with hopes above;
Life for all is clear reflection
Of the Father's grace and love.

Let us then fill our life's story
With our noblest faith and strength,
Work for God, and not for glory,
Make this earth a heaven at length.
May 4, 1878

The ministry of Calvin Stebbins from 1900 to 1910 is marked by the bi-centennial exercises held October 13, 1901. Mr. Stebbins had made an excellent record in Worcester as Pastor before he came here and was well known as a historian, being a prominent member of the American Antiquarian Society. He took an active interest in these commemorative exercises and we have an interesting pamphlet by way of description. Rev. Lucius R. Eastman, the pastor of the Plymouth Church and the members of this church were special guests and the opening prayer was by Mr. Eastman. In the historical address the period of the pastorate of John Swift, Matthew Bridge, and David Kellogg is entertainingly described and there is this description of the division which came in the Unitarian period.

"Friction was inevitable . . . The contending schools of theology at Andover and Cambridge were called in, and the contention went into the air and 'like a comet blazed' with all the passions of human nature.

" 'Not a word or a moment will I give to the rehearsal of the alienation between townsmen, neighbors, families and lifelong friends, attendant and consequent upon this lamentable business.' Both parties have vindicated their right to be, and the passions of that hour should be left in the passionless dust they once animated—in the graveyard.

"Things soon came to such a pass that only a trial of strength could settle the matter. The test vote at last came and the parish was in a majority and in so large a majority that, as the result shows, the minority had no hope of overcoming it. There was nothing for the minority to do but to submit or secede. On the 20th of January, 1830, a new parish was formed, calling itself the 'Hollis Evangelical So-

ciety' and the next Sunday, the 24th, they held services in the town hall. This new society is the present Plymouth Church, the 'Orthodox branch of the First Parish,' and here, so far as this story is concerned, we bid them farewell and Godspeed."

Calvin Stebbins's brother, Dr. Horatio Stebbins, a leading clergyman of the Pacific Coast, had come from California. The hymn, *Auld Lang Syne*, had been written for the occasion by Mr. Humphreys and a former minister, Henry G. Spaulding, gave an address by reminiscence, and then there was an afternoon session with addresses by Dr. Edward Everett Hale; U. S. Senator George F. Hoar, and by Dr. Stebbins.

Mr. Stebbins refers to the third meeting house built in 1807 with a church steeple, a Paul Revere bell given to the Town by Micah Stone, and a clock, the gift of Moses Edgell. This is prominent in the background of the Daniel Bell picture of "View of Framingham Common in 1808" which I have brought with me. Notice the three door entrance, the second story windows and the stately steeple. Mr. Stebbins concludes:

"The old First Parish has come down to us from strong hands, and brings with it the blessing of strong and generous men and women. No one but the Recording Angel knows how much good it has done in these two hundred years; but the need is ever new, and the old bell still sends out its summons to all to learn the significance of life, its aim and purpose, and to learn also that other lesson, 'The relation of the creature to the Creator, of the son to the Father, of the weak and the tempted to the all-quickenings Spirit.' "

In these 250 years there have been in all 19 ministers, three for the first period of practically 130 years and 16 for the last period of practically 120 years, indicating very clearly the trend in matters of settlement and life service. Of the 16 ministers in this latter period the longest term of service seems to be eighteen years, the longest of the three in the first period over half a century.

The period of most difficulty, spiritual and financial, seems to have been in the decade of 1850-60. The letter of resignation of John N. Bellows in December, 1847, as recorded,

shows division after only a years service, then Joseph H. Phipps follows for six years, ending in resignation which is received with a testimonial letter. At a Parish meeting in January, 1854, Samuel D. Robbins is called by a vote of 13 yeas and one nay and is voted a salary of \$800. Then comes the financial panic most extreme in 1859, and in 1860 Mr. Robbins gives \$100 of this sum and offers another \$100 with a letter stating "If I know my own heart I assure you that my one desire is union and prosperity temporal and spiritual."

He served until 1867, thirteen years in all, covering the period of the Civil War—the beginning and recovery. He was active as a citizen, on the School Committee and Chaplain of the House of Representatives. In Temple's history it is stated that he "published occasional sermons, poems, and articles in the magazines and reviews; was a man of vigorous intellect, true culture, and pungent wit, but withal of clear spiritual discernment and religious faith." Although he died in Belmont he was buried in Edgell Grove Cemetery.

Altogether in this period there have been five meeting houses, the first, the barn-like structure on the old Burying Ground from 1701 to 1735; then the second, not much by way of improvement, on the site which has continued to the present time. This was replaced a few years later by a third meeting house, these three all having been built when the parish and the town were united, and paid for by the town appropriation.

On April 3, 1826, the parish was incorporated under the law then permitting it, and from that time has been independent of the Town, and in 1846, in the pastorate of John N. Bellows, a self-constituted committee, financed the building of a fourth meeting house, soliciting private subscriptions and selling pews.

On Sunday, April 4, 1920, this meeting house burned to the ground. In the account in the News the following day it is stated that the parish records were rescued, but that the organ and Paul Revere bell were damaged beyond repair.

Dr. William Allen Knight, associated with the Plymouth Church, a minister and long time helper, and still living in

Framingham writing most welcome editorials in the News, wrote this hymn by way of further description and tribute:

“THE HOUSE THAT LONG HAS BEEN THY TEMPLE”

(Hymn on the burning of the First Parish Church in Framingham to the Tune of “Ancient of Days”)

O God the house that long has been thy Temple,
May fall beneath the rage of midnight fire,
But while the flames illumine our gazing faces
Thou the eternal art our heart’s desire.

Faith, hope and love were there enshrined, our Father,
Amid the long and wayward life of men.
Mem’ries were there endeared by thine own blessing
But faith and hope and love shall live again.

All things upraised by mortal hands shall crumble;
What thou hast wrought in us shall never die.
Behold within our souls contrite and humble
Thy ceaseless Temple, O thou God most high.

With this loss by fire of one of the twin meeting houses at the end of the Common, there was some thought of a united church, but the differences still continued, as evidenced by the two versions of “Holy, Holy, Holy,” one concluding with “trinity” and the other with “unity,” and with the strong financial support in the First Parish plans were made for rebuilding; and soon Charles M. Baker, an active architect, with other buildings in Framingham to preserve his memory, directed the rebuilding, as now existing. The Paul Revere bell was not damaged beyond repair, and was recast and still rings out the call to public worship, and tolls the hours day and night, and money was raised for a new organ of superior excellence, named and given in honor of Frederick Lucian Hosmer, a native of Framingham whose hymns are of world-wide fame, and here for a new generation Unitarian worship has continued.

I have some personal recollections of Mr. Spaulding, as he officiated at the wedding of my sister in my home in South Framingham, January, 1874, and I have read with interest the address which he gave at the bi-centennial following Mr. Stebbins. I can appreciate the passage referring to the dinner, following his ordination, “One of the speakers for the parish was the late General George H. Gordon, who said, among other things, that if he should ever see any member

of the congregation going to sleep in meeting he would throw his hymn book at his head. Possibly the General had in mind a remark made by that zealous friend of the parish, Mr. George Phipps, when I was preaching here as a candidate. Mr. Phipps had been introduced to me as one of 'the pillars of the Church.' 'Oh, no, Mr. Spaulding,' was his quick reply, 'Not one of the pillars, only one of the sleepers.' "

I think of the men who have served as ministers of our parish, these only are now living: John Henry Wilson who was here from 1913 to 1924, now the pastor of the Congregational Church at Wilton, N. H., and at present with us today, known to his many friends as "John Henry"; John Ogden Fisher, now minister in Newton; George F. Patterson who served as interim pastor during Mr. Fisher's absence across the sea during World War II, and our present minister, Rev. Clyde D. Williams. Mr. Wilson has a special interest in this occasion as he can trace his ancestry to an associate of the founders of the parish in 1701. An ancestor, Nathaniel Wilson, had come to Framingham in 1694 and is referred to in Temple's History as a "bricklayer," probably the only one in that early settlement and as such he undoubtedly assisted in laying the foundation in 1701 which figuratively continues in 1951.

An important event in our recent history is the acquiring and opening of a parish house on land adjoining our meeting house. This estate has had an interesting record as a matter of local history, going back to the time of the Plymouth Church minister Rev. George Trask, and coming down through the family of James W. Clark, a prominent citizen, and finally through Wallace Nutting who had occupied it as his headquarters in writing his books on places beautiful. It not only furnishes ample provision for the minister's home, but also for parish suppers, meetings of miscellaneous interest and of public significance. It furnishes a combination of church and social activity promising much for the future.

Mr. Spaulding closed his address with these words appropriate today as they were fifty years ago: "Of those days of long ago, we can truly say 'The past is secure.' The men and women who then made this church a beacon light and a

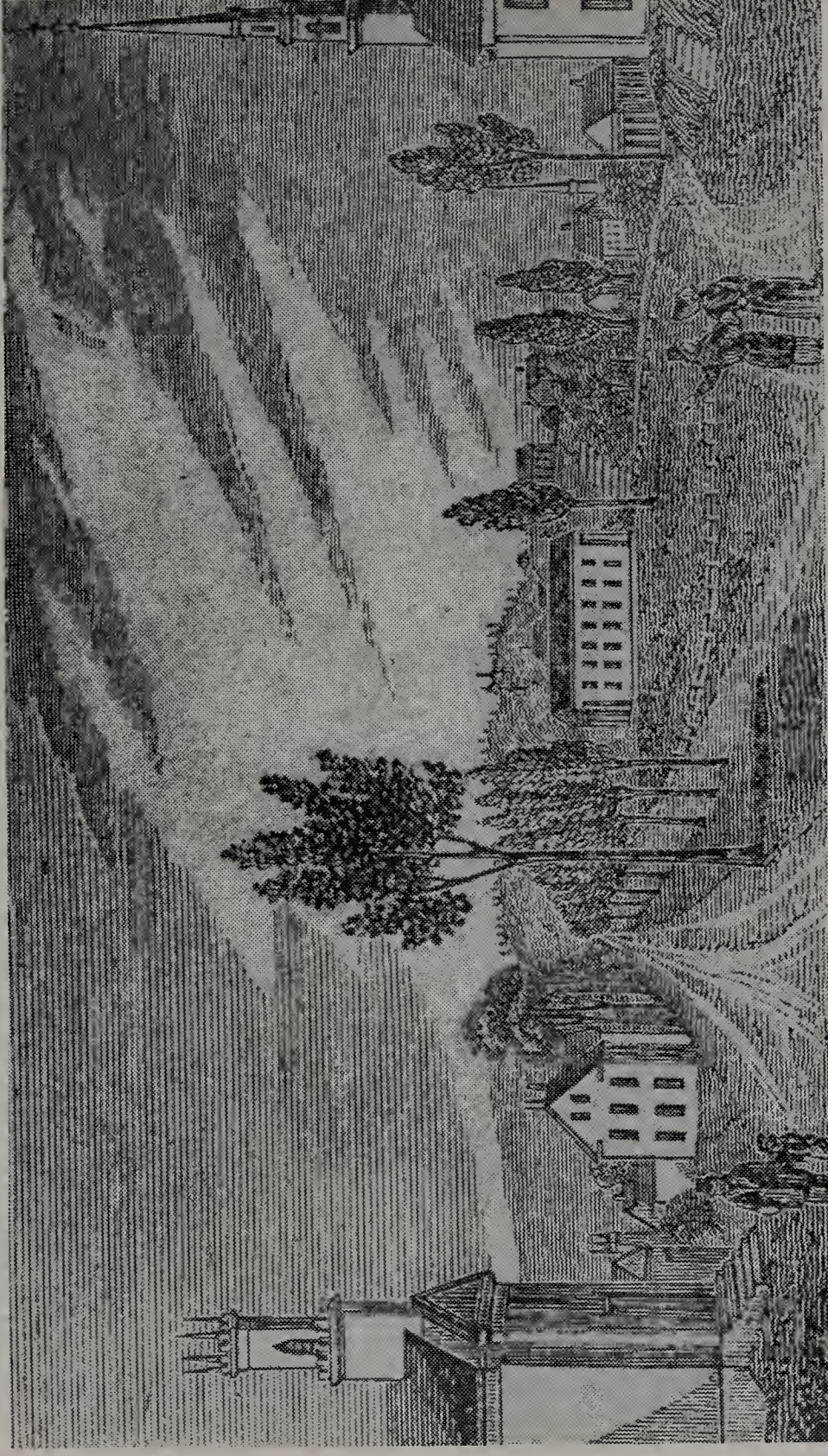
center of kindly warmth for the diffusion of a pure and practical Christianity toiled not in vain. Their deeds live on. Their prayers of humble virtue made the perfume which lingers in this place. Those who have come after them have entered into their labors. For all of truth and of love that really exists at any time lasts ever. Just as the fields on these hillsides may lie fallow, or may be clothed with verdure, or covered with rich harvests, while all the time, from springs beneath, the refreshing water flows; so society may wear a new face; customs may vary; rules and standards, like human opinions, may change; but the soul and its life; man's religious aspirations and his religious activities—these abide—these make the

‘One holy Church of God
In every age and race;
Unharm’d, upon the eternal Rock,
Unchanged by changing place.

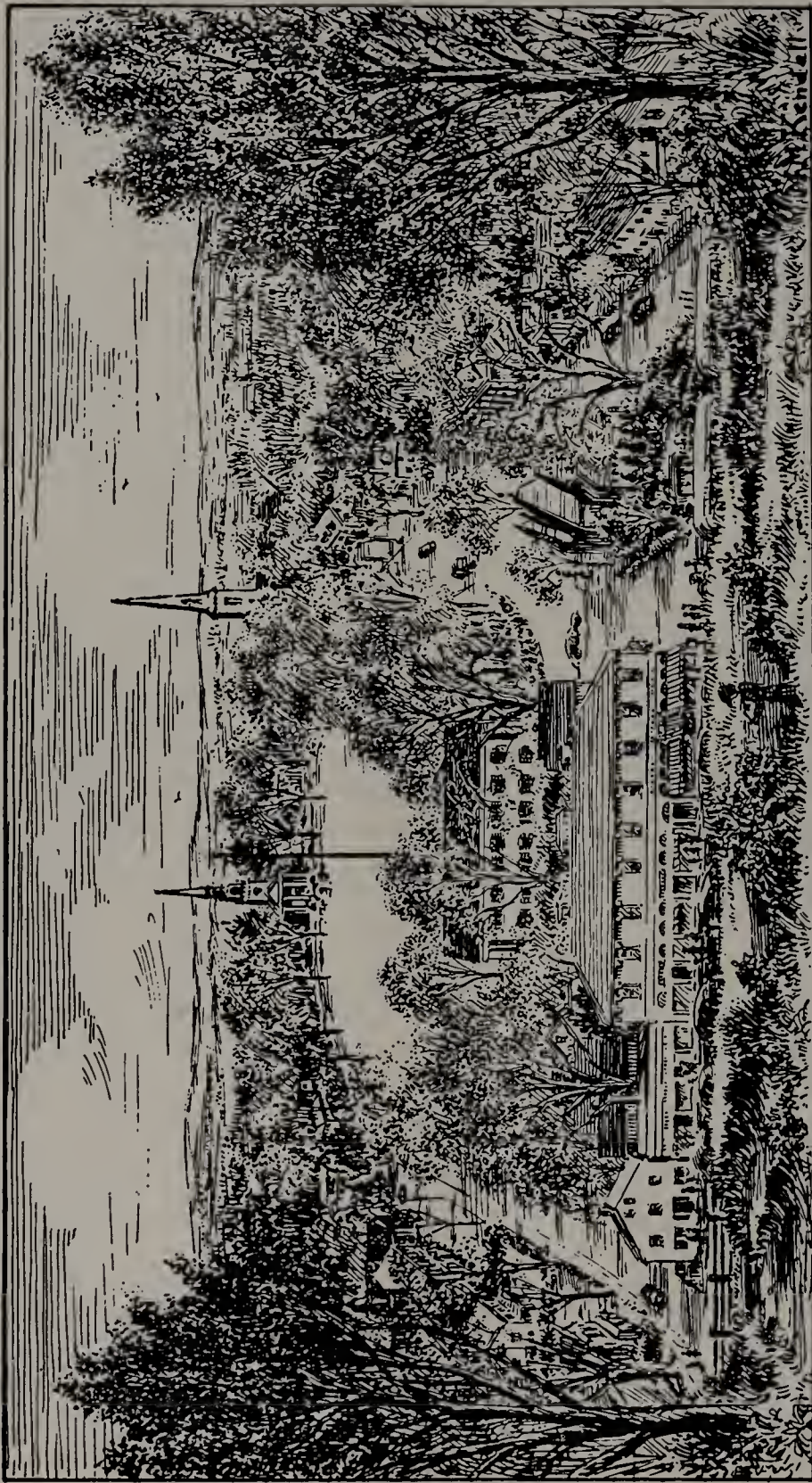
‘In vain the surges’ angry shock;
In vain the drifting sands:
Unharm’d, upon the eternal Rock;
The Eternal City stands.’”

Ministers of the First Parish in Framingham 1701 to 1951

1701-1745	Rev. John Swift, A.M
1745-1775	Rev. Matthew Bridge, A.M.
1781-1830	Rev. David Kellogg, D.D.
1830-1833	Rev. Artemas Bowers Muzzey, D.D.
1833-1834	Rev. George Chapman, A.B.
1835-1845	Rev. William Barry, A.M.
1846-1848	Rev. John Nelson Bellows
1848-1853	Rev. Joseph Hobson Phipps
1854-1867	Rev. Samuel Dowse Robbins, A.M.
1868-1873	Rev. Henry George Spaulding, A.B.
1873-1891	Rev. Charles Alfred Humphreys, A.B.
1892-1899	Rev. Ernest Charles Smith, A.M.
1900-1910	Rev. Calvin Stebbins, D.D.
1911-1915	Rev. James Cobourg Hodgins, D.D.
1915-1924	Rev. John Henry Wilson, A.B.
1925-1938	Rev. Ralph Henry Baldwin, A.M.
1939-1949	Rev. John Ogden Fisher, S.T.M.
1943-1946	Rev. George Francis Patterson, D.D.
1949-	Rev. Clyde Delabar Williams, B.D.



Framingham in 1841



View of Framingham Centre Common 1950. Town of Framingham Incorporated 1700.

The views of Framingham, 1808 and 1950, are used here through the kindness of the artist, Miss Margaret M. Kendall.

Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society,
Volume IX Part II.

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